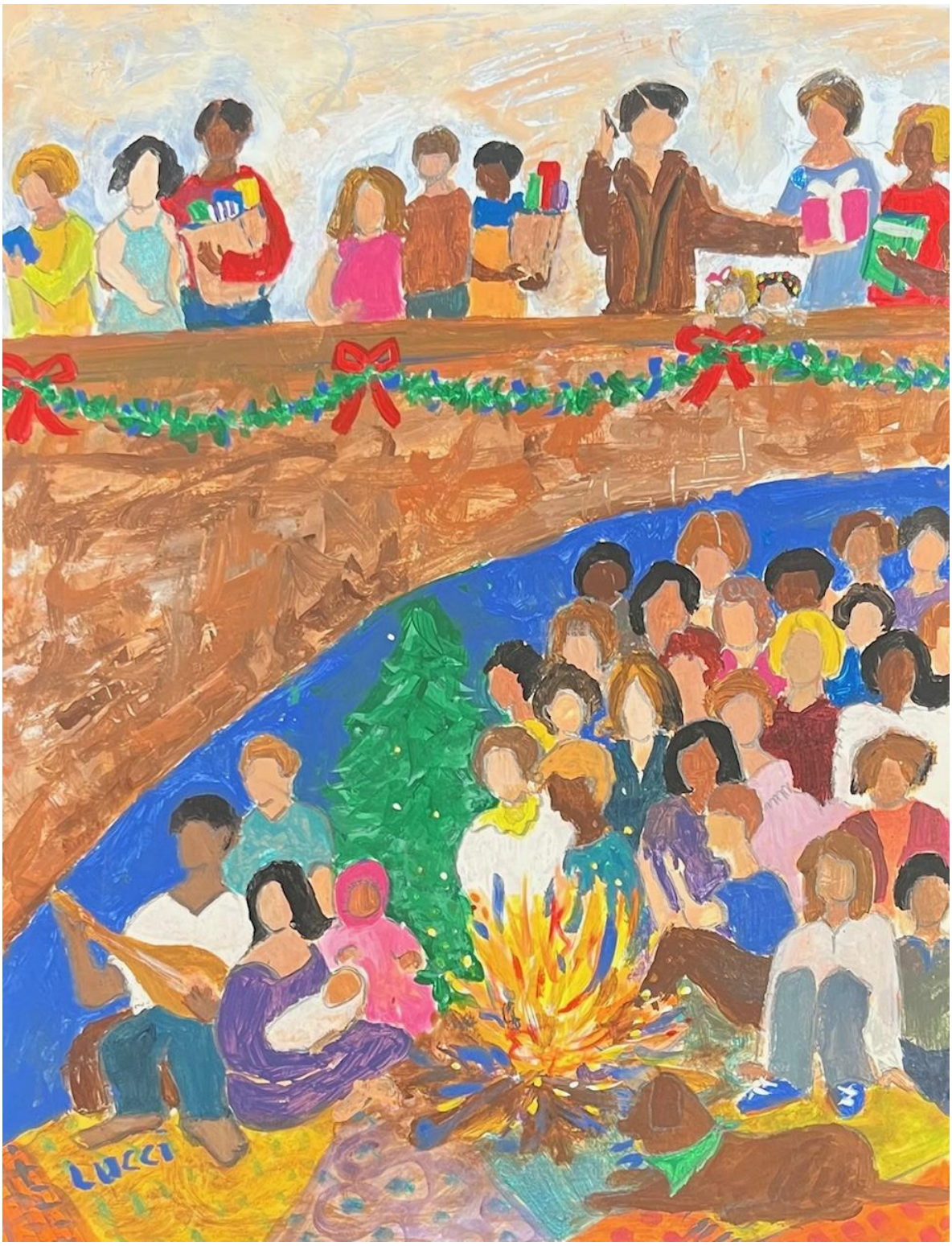


TRIUNE MERCY CENTER

ADVENT BOOKLET

2026

What is Advent?

Advent is a four-week season in the church's year that leads up to Christmas Day. It is a time of expectant waiting and reflective preparation – waiting on the birth of the Child of God and simultaneously preparing ourselves for His return.

Advent is a very old practice in the life of the church. No one knows the date of the first observance of Advent, but we do know that it comes all the way from Medieval times.

The Medieval church gave us many wonderful gifts such as stained-glass windows, depicting Biblical scenes for those who could not read. It gave us beautiful paintings and sculpted reliefs, helping us to visualize the Scriptures. It gave us Mystery, Miracle, and Morality plays – dramas that enacted Biblical stories and moral teaching. The Medieval church gave us illuminated texts, beautiful renderings of the Bible, which were hand printed. And it gave us the seasons of the church year, like Advent.

In this collection, we celebrate the stories and thoughts of the people at Triune Mercy Center. We celebrate art and the gift of getting to know one another as we contemplate the grand story in which we find ourselves.

This year, we asked our writers to sit down with a person of their choosing. They were given a list of ten questions. First, the writer was interviewed by their chosen person before conducting their own interview. This was an effort to get to know one another and to share space together. The interview questions mostly came from James Lipton's interviews on "Inside the Actor's Studio" – we tweaked them here and there.

In these pages you will find people who are waiting on GOD. These same people are the ones Christ comes to walk and live alongside as He teaches us how to make the world a better place.

Each day contains a personal interview and a work of art. We believe the two make the world a better place. We invite you to spend a few minutes reading, thinking, and praying for one another each day as we wait together.

Peace to you. And joy, and hope, and love.

Cover Art by Lucci – Acrylic

The Ten Questions

1. What is your favorite word?
2. What is your least favorite word?
3. What makes you happy?
4. What makes you unhappy?
5. What sound or noise do you love?
6. What sound or noise do you detest?
7. What profession would like to attempt?
8. What's your favorite scripture?
9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?

Table of Contents (Click on a Date)

November 29
November 30
December 1
December 2
December 3
December 4
December 5
December 6
December 7
December 8
December 9
December 10
December 11
December 12
December 13
December 14
December 15
December 16
December 17
December 18
December 19
December 20
December 21
December 22
December 23
December 24
Christmas Day



Editor's Note:

I like to walk in Unity Park. After several months, I noticed a blue birdhouse. It had been there all the time, but I never saw it. Then I started looking. There were birdhouses everywhere: red, green, yellow, blue.

There are people all around us as well. Sometimes we never notice them.

This year's Advent devotions are a series of interviews designed to help us get to know one another.

To see one another.

To know we are here in this place, waiting, together.

We are one. We always have been.

Open your eyes as we wait.

Owen Robertson

November 29: Advent Day One

Joel Armistead interviewed Carol Highsmith

1. What is your favorite word?

    Laughter.

    I think laughter is a sign of joy. It's a sign of not taking ourselves too seriously. When we laugh, we invite joy into our heart. A beautiful thing.

2. What is your least favorite word?

    Hatred.

    It's the polar opposite of laughter. It's almost impossible to laugh when you are full of hate. Or just the reverse. When you are full of hate, you know no laughter, no joy.

3. What makes you happy?

    A beautiful sunset

4. What makes you unhappy?

    When our loved ones turn a blind eye to the love of God.

5. What sound or noise do you love?

    The stream, the creek.

    Not really rushing by, but a gentle rambling of the water over the rocks.

6. What sound or noise do you detest?

    Bombs

7. What profession would like to attempt?

    To be a skydive instructor.

    I went skydiving, tandem sky diving, and it would be a real thrill to be able to teach people how to skydive.

8. What's your favorite scripture?

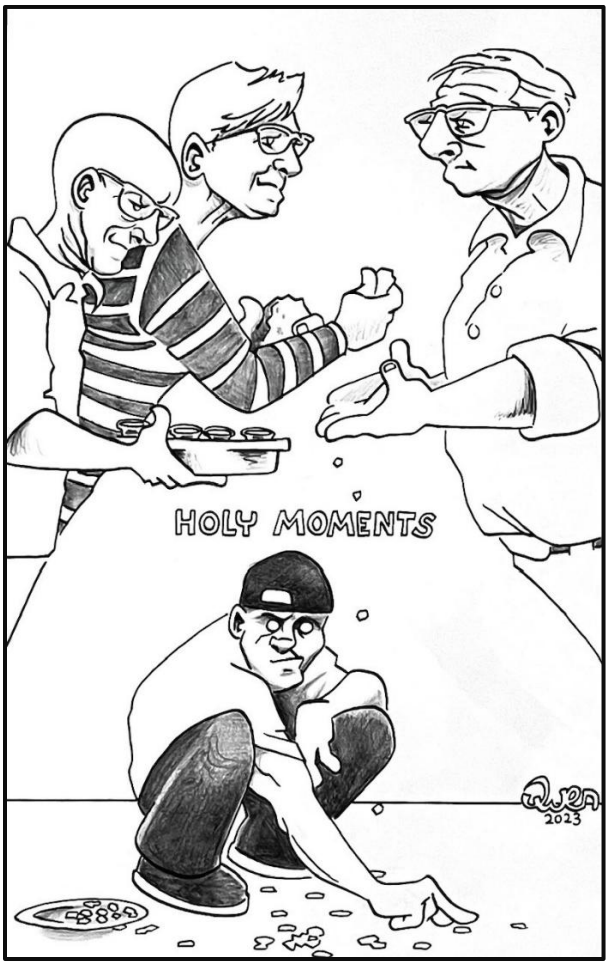
    The 23rd Psalm

    [1] The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
    [2] He makes me lie down in green pastures,
    he leads me beside quiet waters,
    [3] he refreshes my soul.
    He guides me along the right paths
    for his name's sake.
    [4] Even though I walk
    through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
"Welcome home. I love you."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
I long for the pollution to go away. Clean air. It's a big wish, but that would be awesome to be able have nature, the Earth, the way God created it.



Owen Robertson ink & graphite

November 30: Advent Day Two

In turn, Carol interviewed Joel Armistead

1. What is your favorite word?

    Hope.

    I have a lot of hope for my family, my grandchildren, and I hope that I leave them a better world.

2. What is your least favorite word?

    Can't.

    I hate it when people tell me I can't do something. I may have difficulty doing it, but don't tell me I can't do it.

3. What makes you happy?

    Everybody in my family cooks, so I love a good meal where everybody brings a dish to share.

4. What makes you unhappy?

    Looking at the world around me and seeing the state of our world, and it makes me unhappy that this may be the legacy that I am leaving to my grandchildren. That makes me unhappy.

5. What sound or noise do you love?

    A cat's purr.

6. What sound or noise do you detest?

    The sound of our president attempting to give a speech.

7. What profession would you like to attempt?

    History professor.

    I think if we are willing to look at history, we can learn from other people's mistakes. So often, we think of history as memorizing dates. But the dates don't matter. It's what happened and what we learn from it.

8. What's your favorite scripture?

    In Mark's gospel, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, asked him what is the greatest commandment, and he responded: "You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength." But he went on to expound that the second greatest is "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." and that those are equal. That's difficult in our society sometimes. But I try to

make that a touchstone in my life, to always try to love my neighbor, no matter how "unloving" they might seem.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
"Welcome home."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
My wife has cancer, and I pray constantly for her healing. My wife is an excellent "pinch & dab" cook. The medication that she is on for her cancer treatment has taken away her sense of taste, and I hope and pray that the sense of taste will be restored so that she once again can enjoy the pleasure of preparing a good healthy meal and sharing it with family and friends.



Rebecca Constantine acrylic

December 1: Advent Day Three

Russ Reed interviewed Dan Weathers.

1. What is your favorite word?
   Community

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hopeless

3. What makes you happy?
   Helping Others

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Feeling Alone

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Laughter

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Quiet

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Some sort of radio or video personality

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Matthew 6:25–34 (King James Version)

   25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

   26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

   27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

   28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

   29 And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   I'd love to hear God say, "Your parents have been waiting for you and they're so proud of the man you've become."

10. What are you waiting for (or longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    I'd love to see a world where people care more about one another, where nobody feels forgotten, and where everyone has a reason to hope.



Russ Reed acrylic

December 2: Advent Day Four

In turn, Dan Weathers interviewed Russ Reed

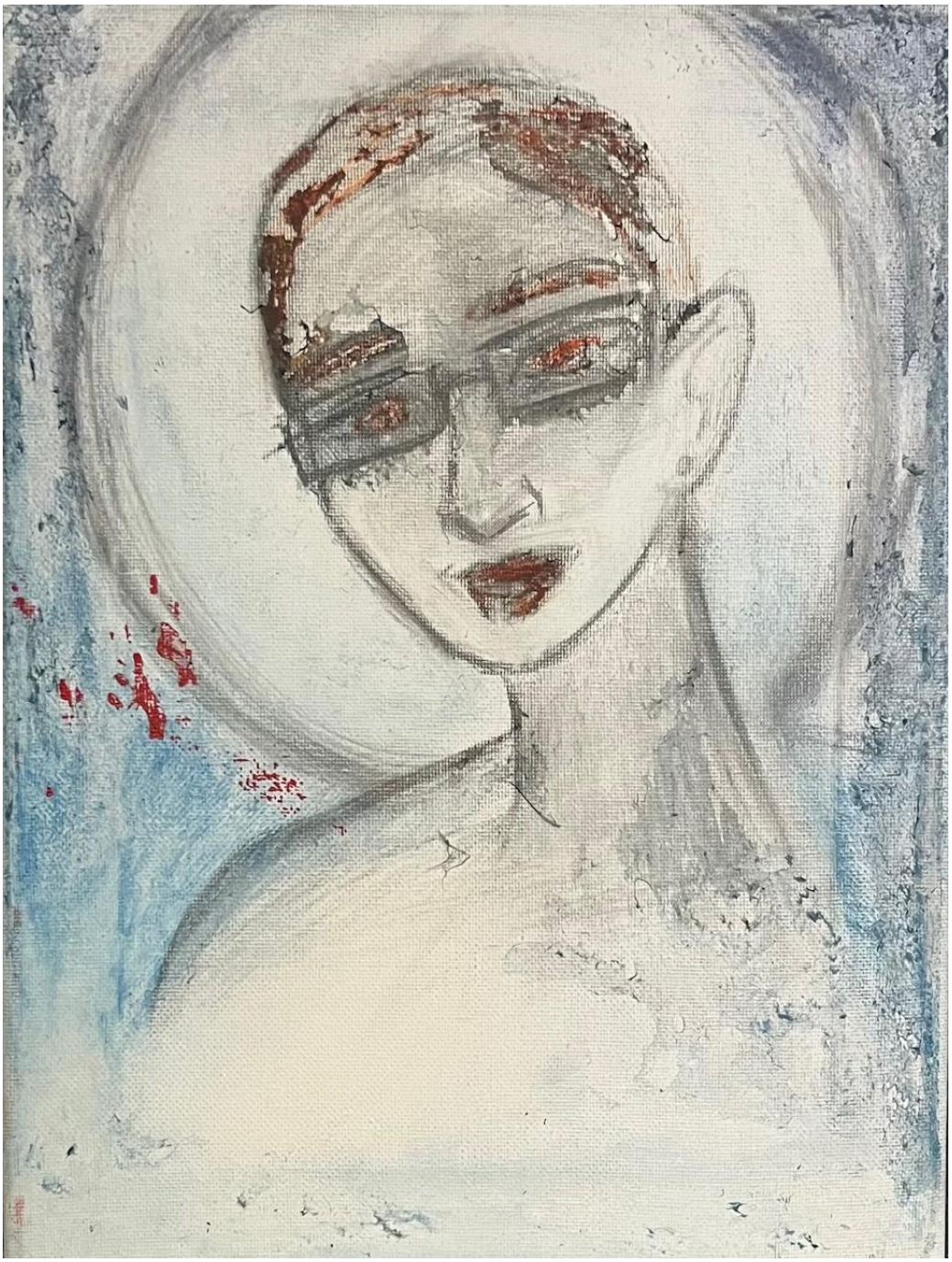
What Took You So Long?
A Conversation with Russ Reed

If you know Russ Reed, you know he's a man of few words. He's not one to give you a long, drawn-out answer when one or two words will do. But don't mistake that for a lack of wisdom. Russ is a veteran, a recovering alcoholic with over 30 years of sobriety, and a man who knows firsthand what it's like to experience homelessness. Today, he has a home of his own and works helping people who are facing some of the same struggles he once faced. When I asked him his favorite word, he answered simply, "Mercy." His least favorite? "Hate." What makes him happy? "Community." What makes him unhappy? "Ignorance." He loves the sound of laughter and can't stand conflict. And when I asked what profession, he would like to try, his answer was just as direct: "Professional sports agent." Seven questions, seven short answers. But when you consider the life he's lived, those few words say quite a lot.

When I asked Russ about his favorite scripture, he immediately answered, "Proverbs 3:5–6." After giving me a little good-natured grief for not knowing the passage by heart, he proceeded to recite it from memory with the clarity and confidence of a teenager, never missing a beat: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." That seems especially fitting for a man whose journey has taken him places he probably never imagined. Russ doesn't dress his thoughts up in fancy language. He doesn't need to. There's a certain wisdom that comes from having lived through the hard stuff and coming out the other side.

But perhaps my favorite moment came when I asked Russ what he'd like to hear God say when he finally arrives at the Pearly Gates. Without missing a beat, he answered, "What took you so long?" We both laughed, and then Russ explained that he never expected to live this long. He certainly hadn't expected the journey to take so long, and, as he joked, he wasn't sure God had either. There's something beautiful about that answer. A man who once struggled to find his place in this world is still here, still laughing, still serving others, and still finding purpose.

But it was his answer to my final question that perhaps revealed the most about his heart. When I asked what he was still waiting for God to do in his life or in the world, Russ answered simply, "Mend estranged relationships." Just three words, but they carry a lifetime of meaning. For a man who names mercy as his favorite word, hate as his least favorite, and community as something that brings him happiness, it's a fitting answer. Russ knows that life doesn't always turn out the way we expect, and that some things remain unfinished. Maybe that's part of what Advent asks us to consider: not just the mercy we've received, but the mercy we're still called to extend. And perhaps, while we're waiting for God to mend what's broken, He's giving us another day to take the first step.



Skyler Hook acrylic

December 3: Advent Day Five

Kathy Sharp was interviewed by Darius Barnes

1. What is your favorite word?
   Accompaniment

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hatred

3. What makes you happy?
   Going to Cuba

4. What makes you unhappy?
   When my children are unhappy

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Birdsong

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Loud motors

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Archeologist

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   1 John 4:20-21

   20 Those who say, "I love God" and hate their brothers or sisters are liars. After all, those
   who don't love their brothers or sisters whom they have seen can hardly love God
   whom they have not seen! 21 This commandment we have from him: Those who claim
   to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "I've got this."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    God's justice



Charles Anderson acrylic

December 4: Advent Day Six

In turn, Kathy interviewed Darius Barnes

1. What is your favorite word?
   Love

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Can't

3. What makes you happy?
   Stability

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Instability

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Laughter

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Arguing

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Truck Driver

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Philippians 1:21

   "Because for me, living serves Christ and dying is even better."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Welcome to eternity."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Get me into a better situation



Na’Ziah Goojoine

mixed media

December 5: Advent Day 7

Joel Belofsky was interviewed by David Highsmith

1. What is your favorite word?
   Believe

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Judgmental

3. What makes you happy?
   Helping other people

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Seeing homeless people on the street

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   When it rains

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   The sound of a loud motorcycle

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Write children's Christmas books

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Matthew 8:23-27

   23 When Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him. 24 A huge storm arose on the
   lake so that waves were sloshing over the boat. But Jesus was asleep. 25 They came and
   woke him, saying, "Lord, rescue us! We're going to drown!"
   26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you people of weak faith?" Then he got up and
   gave orders to the winds and the lake, and there was a great calm.
   27 The people were amazed and said, "What kind of person is this? Even the winds and
   the lake obey him!"

   I also like Mark 4:35-41 Luke 8:22-25

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Your loved ones that passed are waiting to see you. Welcome."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Stop homelessness and people going to bed with no food. No one should go to bed hungry.



Yulia Potapenko watercolor

December 6: Advent Day Eight

In turn, Joel interviewed David Highsmith

1. What is your favorite word?
   Grace

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Greed

3. What makes you happy?
   Encouraging or affirming others

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Conflict

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Birds singing

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Arguing

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Landscaping

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   The Beatitudes (from Matthew 5)

"Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
4 "Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.
5 "Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.
6 "Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be
fed until they are full.
7 "Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.
8 "Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.
9 "Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children.
10 "Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
11 "Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad
and false things about you, all because of me. 12 Be full of joy and be glad,
because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed
the prophets who came before you.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?

   “Rest now.”

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?

    I’m curious why God allows so much cruelty and hate.



Na’Ziah Goodjoine acrylic

December 7: Advent Day Nine

Willie Hampton interviewed Don Austin

1. What is your favorite word?
   Serenity

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Satan

3. What makes you happy?
   Jesus makes me happy.

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Evil things in the world

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Gospel music

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Gun shots

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Legal Field

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   John 14:1-23

"Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me. 2 My Father's house has room to
spare. If that weren't the case, would I have told you that I'm going to prepare a place
for you? 3 When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me
so that where I am you will be too. 4 You know the way to the place I'm going."
5 Thomas asked, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the
way?"
6 Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father
except through me. 7 If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From
now on you know him and have seen him."
8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father; that will be enough for us."
9 Jesus replied, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this
time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the
Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I
have spoken to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me does his

works. [11] Trust me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or at least
believe on account of the works themselves. [12] I assure you that whoever believes in
me will do the works that I do. They will do even greater works than these because I am
going to the Father. [13] I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father can
be glorified in the Son. [14] When you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.

[15] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. [16] I will ask the Father, and he will
send another Companion, who will be with you forever. [17] This Companion is the Spirit
of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him.
You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.
[18] "I won't leave you as orphans. I will come to you. [19] Soon the world will no longer see
me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. [20] On that day you will know
that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. [21] Whoever has my
commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my
Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."
[22] Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked, "Lord, why are you about to reveal yourself to us and
not to the world?"

[23] Jesus answered, "Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and
we will come to them and make our home with them.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
"Well Done. Come In."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
Change from inside-out. And obtain housing in the name of God.



Ninja Picasso detail from Mural @ Triune

December 8: Advent Day Ten

In turn, Don Austin interviewed Willie Hampton

1. What is your favorite word?
   Jesus

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hatred

3. What makes you happy?
   This life God has blessed me with.

4. What makes you unhappy?
   People

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Music in general

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Loud noises

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Addiction Help Profession

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   John 3:16

   "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done, my son."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Someone to love. Find my soulmate.



Les Gardner photograph

December 9: Advent Day Eleven

Marydell Gordon interviewed Tim Turner

1. What is your favorite word?
   Hope

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hate

3. What makes you happy?
   Pleasing Others

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Prejudice

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Children Laughing

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Hard Rock or Rapp Music

7. What profession would you like to attempt?
   Country Singer

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   James 4:7

   "So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

9. What would you like to hear God to do in your life or in the world today?
   "Well done!"

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    For there to be racial equality.



Fred Wood watercolor

December 10: Advent Day Twelve

Tim Turner, in turn, interviewed Marydell Gordon

1. What is your favorite word?
   Hallelujah

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Stupid/Dumb

3. What makes you happy?
   The smiles of my nieces and nephews

4. What makes you unhappy?
   When people do not see their worth.

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Pastor Jennifer's laugh.

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Racing, Loud Car Engines

7. What profession would you like to attempt?
   Motivational Speaker

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Proverbs 16:9

   "We make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done, good and faithful servant…Enter into the joy of the LORD." Come on in & have some dessert!

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    I'm longing for God to help Christian communities respect and make an intentional effort to understand the worship style and praise style of other Christian communities.



Bailey Sheorn marker

December 11: Advent Day Thirteen

Dalphine Sharese interviewed Da' Mya

1. What is your favorite word?
   Gosh

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Accent

3. What makes you happy?
   Loved ones

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Seeing people unhoused

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Nature

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Smacking

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Nursing

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Jeremiah 33:3

   "Call to me and I will answer and reveal to you wondrous secrets that you haven't known."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Welcome."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    To heal me and for me to get back on my feet.



Victoria Amezquita acrylic

December 12: Advent Day Fourteen

In turn, Da' Mya interviewed Dalphine Sharese

1. What is your favorite word?
   Wonder

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Depressed

3. What makes you happy?
   My children

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Fascism

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Barred Owl hoot

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Forced breathing while sleeping

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Occupational Therapist

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   John 14:1

   "Don't be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Girl, I've been waiting! Your mama and daddy are here."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Everyone in the world should have housing and food.



Dalphine Sharese

oil pastels

December 13: Advent Day Fifteen

Valerie interviewed Tansie

1. What is your favorite word?
   Winsome

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hate

3. What makes you happy?
   Reading, coffee, outdoors, smiles, laughing, light

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Liars

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Children laughing

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Raise angry voices

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Counseling

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Mark 2:17

   When Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. I didn't come to call righteous people, but sinners."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done, good and faithful servant."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Our son to be saved. And in the world, Jesus to come back.



Tansie Phillips oil

December 14: Advent Day Sixteen

In turn, Tansie interviewed Valerie

1. What is your favorite word?
   Love
2. What is your least favorite word?
   Unlovable
3. What makes you happy?
   Laughing and outdoors
4. What makes you unhappy?
   Rain
5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Relaxing symphonic music
6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Gas-powered blower
7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Architect
8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Matthew 22:38-39

   38 "This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: *You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.*"

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Wow. That was close." 😊
10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    World peace and saving our environment



KT acrylic

December 15: Advent Day Seventeen

Lee interviewed Otis

1. What is your favorite word?
   Otis

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Devil

3. What makes you happy?
   Self-reliance

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Dependence (depending on someone else)

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Volume distortion and feedback

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Sounds of agony

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Successful businessman

8. What's your favorite scripture?

   John 2:13

   "It was nearly time for the Jewish Passover, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   I'd ask, "Where my bed at?" And God would say, "Straight ahead. No turning back."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    God to make me successful.



Otis White

mixed media

December 16: Advent Day Eighteen

In turn, Otis interviewed Lee

1. What is your favorite word?
   Peace

2. What is your least favorite word?
   War

3. What makes you happy?
   My family

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Arguments

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Birds singing

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Collisions. Cars crashing

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Artist

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Philippians 4:6-7

   6 Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your
   prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. 7 Then the peace of God that exceeds all
   understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done, good and faithful servant."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    World peace. Harmony. Serenity.



Lee Mason multimedia

December 17: Advent Day Nineteen

Laura Amezquita interviewed Suzanne Willkinson

1. What is your favorite word?
   Jesus

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Blasphemy

3. What makes you happy?
   Grandchildren

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Children's struggle with faith.

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Laughter or grandchildren

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   People's mean words

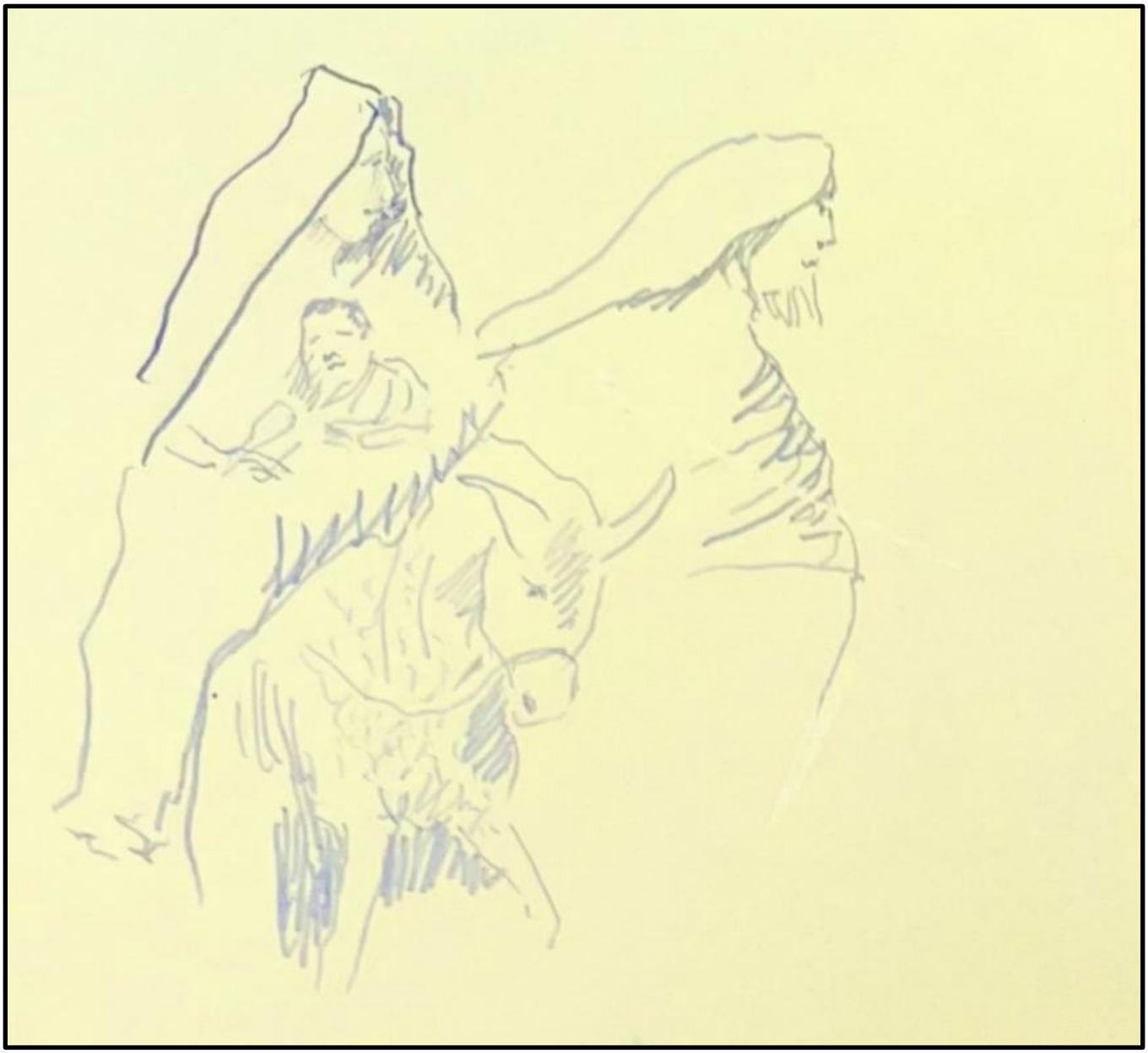
7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Retired

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   1 John 4:16

   "We have known and have believed the love that God has for us.
   God is love, and those who remain in love remain in God and God remains in them."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done, my daughter."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    To help do His will and the world to know Jesus.



Michael Graham graphite

December 18: Advent Day Twenty

In turn, Suzanne Willkinson interviewed Laura Amezquita

1. What is your favorite word?
   Love

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Hate

3. What makes you happy?
   Freedom for all

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Self-imposed limits

5. What or noise do you love?
   People's joy

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Loud cars

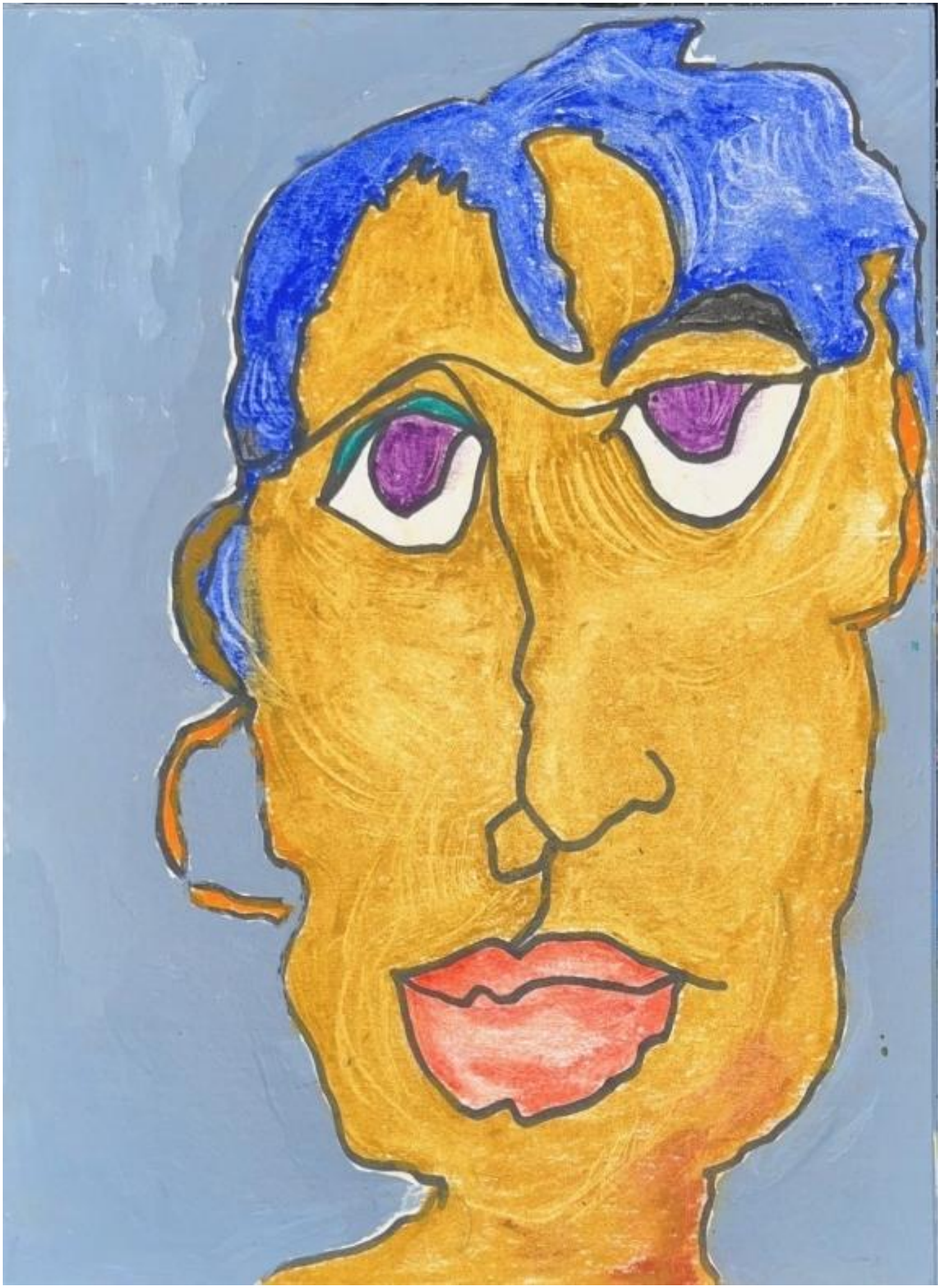
7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Therapeutic Psychology

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   1 Corinthians 13:7

   "Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "All is one."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    For all of us to truly know ourselves.



Lee Mason

acrylic

December 19: Advent Day Twenty-One

Aliceia Brewster interviewed Nicole Harmon

1. What is your favorite word?
   Suffice

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Can't

3. What makes you happy?
   Friendship, Personal Solitude and Peace

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Being in the Public Eye

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Music, especially Rap

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Taunting

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Healthcare Management/Medical Records Administrator

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Jeremiah 29:11

   "I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "You don't have to explain. I understand everything."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Change the atmosphere. Change my circumstances.



Hillbilly

acrylic on plexiglass

December 20: Advent Day Twenty-Two

In turn, Nicole Harmon interviewed Alecia Brewster

1. What is your favorite word?
   Love

2. What is your least favorite word?
   You "should" …

3. What makes you happy?
   Music, especially Motown

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Physical and Structural Violence

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Children Laughing

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Nails on a chalkboard

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   I'd like to travel the world learning about what's most important to communities, promoting understanding across cultures and advancing peaceful solutions.

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Matthew 22:36-40

   36 "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

   37 He replied, *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being,* and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: *You must love your neighbor as you love yourself*. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   "Well done."

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Continue to protect and guide us to the promised land



Rebecca Constantine

acrylic

December 21: Advent Day Twenty-Three

Brenda Vaughan interviewed Trevor Scott Barton

1. Serendipity is my favorite word. I love to find beauty in unexpected places — like finding a dandelion growing through a crack in the sidewalk.

2. My least favorite word is anxiety. It reminds me how much I hate to be stuck in the fight, flight, or freeze state of mind.

3. Writing a story or a poem makes me happy.

4. It makes me unhappy to see someone struggling and not being able to help them.

5. I love to hear the sound of waves breaking on the shoreline — especially in the early morning and late evening.

6. I hate the sound of loud crowds.

7. If I could start my life over again, I would try to become a missionary doctor.

8. My favorite scripture comes from I Corinthians — "The foolishness of God is wiser than people's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than people's strength."

9. When I arrive at heaven's gate, I would like to hear God say, "You saw things the way I see them, and you felt things the way I feel them."

10. I am longing for everyone to have good healthcare.



Christy Peaks acrylic

December 22: Advent Day Twenty-Four

In turn, Trevor Scott Barton interviewed Brenda Vaughan

1. Grace is my favorite word. To think that God can take my mistakes and make something good out of them means a lot to me.

2. My least favorite word is any cuss word that takes God's name in vain.

3. Hiking, kayaking and anything I can do outside makes me happy.

4. It makes me unhappy to think that my daughter doesn't know how much Jesus loves her. I wish I had been a better example to her. But that is why grace is my favorite word.

5. I love the sound of music — especially Jazz, Big Band, and Blues music.

6. I hate the sound of loud crowds.

7. If I could start my life again, I would try to become a doctor. I was a pre-med student at Wofford. I would try to become a psychiatrist or a mental health counselor. My lived experience would help me be a more compassionate doctor.

8. My favorite scripture comes from the book of Romans: “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

9. When I make it to heaven, I hope to hear God say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

10. I am longing for my life to matter for God's upside-down Kingdom in these last years of my life.



Judy Cromwell acrylic

December 23: Advent Day Twenty-Five

This is Owen, your friendly Advent book editor. I just couldn't help myself. I had to imagine interviewing Jesus. Reckless, I know. But here goes. (If you're brave, you might want to give it a shot yourself.)

1. What is your favorite word?
   Together

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Forsaken

3. What makes you happy?
   Your laugh makes me happy. Your smile. When you make eye contact with people and they can see delight in your eyes. That makes me happy.

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Your pain. Physical. Emotional. The pain deep down in your Spirit.

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Laughter and Joy. Music.

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Wailing and pain. Separation.

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Are you serious? I love building things.

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Isaiah 61

   The Spirit of the Lord God
   has taken control of me!
   The Lord has chosen and sent me
   to tell the oppressed
   the good news,
   to heal the brokenhearted,
   and to announce freedom
   for prisoners and captives.
   [2]This is the year
   when the Lord God

will show kindness to us
and punish our enemies.
The Lord has sent me
to comfort those who mourn,
3 especially in Jerusalem.
He sent me to give them flowers
in place of their sorrow,
olive oil in place of tears,
and joyous praise
in place of broken hearts.
They will be called
"Trees of Justice,"
planted by the Lord
to honor his name.
4 Then they will rebuild cities
that have been in ruins
for many generations.
5 They will hire foreigners
to take care of their sheep
and their vineyards.
6 But they themselves will be
priests and servants
of the Lord our God.
The treasures of the nations
will belong to them,
and they will be famous.
7 They were terribly insulted
and horribly mistreated;
now they will be greatly blessed
and joyful forever.
8 I, the Lord, love justice!
But I hate robbery
and injustice.
My people, I solemnly promise
to reward you
with an eternal agreement.
9 Your descendants will be known
in every nation.
All who see them will realize
that they have been blessed,
by me, the Lord.

[10] I celebrate and shout
because of my Lord God.
His saving power and justice
are the very clothes I wear.
They are more beautiful
than the jewelry worn
by a bride or groom.
[11] The Lord will bring about
justice and praise
in every nation on earth,
like flowers blooming
in a garden.

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates? That's a weird question to ask you. How about, "What do you like to say when people arrive in Heaven?"

   Nothing. I just like to stand there and smile and laugh and applaud and applaud and applaud.

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?
    Owen, go back and read Isaiah 61 again. That's what I'm waiting for. If you search inside yourself, it's what you're waiting for as well. I'm waiting with you. You're waiting with me. We are waiting together.



Dan Weathers photograph

December 24: Advent Day Twenty-Six

Then, in turn, Jesus interviews me. (You might want to take a stab at letting him interview you.)

1. What is your favorite word, Owen?
   Imagine

2. What is your least favorite word?
   Unworthy. But I like the look and sounds of contempt even less.

3. What makes you happy?
   Freedom … and butterflies. And finding shark teeth on the beach.

4. What makes you unhappy?
   Fear

5. What sound or noise do you love?
   Joyous laughter

6. What sound or noise do you detest?
   Squirrels in the attic and dogs barking at 1am.

7. What profession would like to attempt?
   Professional Cartoonist

8. What's your favorite scripture?
   Matthew 28:20 (the final bit of your great commission)

   "I will be with you always, even until the end of the world."

9. What would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?
   I think I'd like to hear that laughter and applause you were talking about when I was interviewing you. I think I'd like that a lot.

10. What are you waiting for (longing for) God to do in your life or in the world today?

    I'm waiting for everything to be made new – including me – unless its already happened. Am I waiting for something that's already happened and I just haven't clued in on it yet? How embarrassing.

    I'm waiting for there to be no more pain. (Jesus puts his hand on my shoulder.)
    I'm waiting for there to be no more fear and no more death. (I see the scars from the

nails and I start to cry.)
I'm waiting for God to wipe away all the tears from my eyes. (He wipes the tears from my face.)
I'm waiting for there to be no more separation. (He holds me. And I know that he's been right there all the time – even when I didn't see it.)

And like the butterfly from the cocoon, I am waiting to be transformed and set free.



Gina Marie Pacheco acrylic

December 25: Christmas Day

Our wait is over.

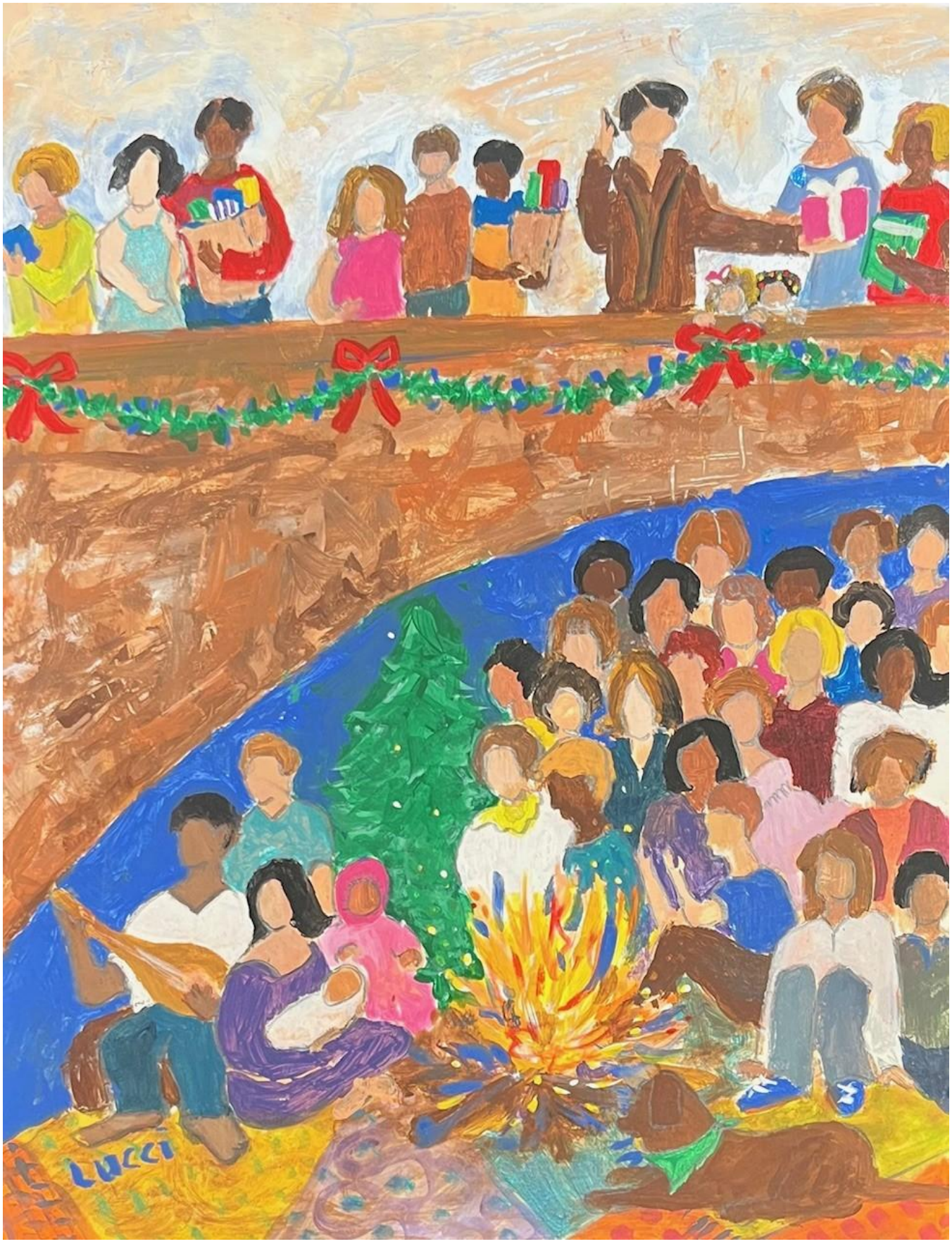
Luke 2:1-20

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in
the tax lists. [2] This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. [3] Everyone went to their
own cities to be enrolled. [4] Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from
the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. [5] He went to be enrolled
together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. [6] While they were
there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. [7] She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son,
wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the
guestroom.

[8] Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. [9] The Lord's angel stood
before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.
[10] The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you — wonderful, joyous news for all
people. [11] Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. [12] This is a sign for you: you
will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." [13] Suddenly a great assembly of the
heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, [14] "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth
peace among those whom he favors."

[15] When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to
Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." [16] They went
quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. [17] When they saw this, they
reported what they had been told about this child. [18] Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the
shepherds told them. [19] Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully.
[20] The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.
Everything happened just as they had been told.

Glory to God - Peace on Earth - Goodwill to Everyone



Lucci acrylic